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A PROSPECTUS FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

THE CONSERVATION OF
HISTORICAL
AND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES
IN ALBERTA

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA - MAY 25, 1972

CALGARY, ALBERTA - MAY 29, 1972

EDMONTON, ALBERTA - JUNE 1, 1972

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PROSPECTUS ON

THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN ALBERTA

1. Background

There may not be perfect agreement as to how long man has occupied the land that is now contained within the boundaries of the Province of Alberta. Archaeologists have shown, however, that this occupation has probably extended intermittently over several thousands of years, each era and epoch in that long history leaving its own records and traces.

The time of human occupation may be roughly divided into two uneven segments, the relatively short recent period from which written records remain, and the much longer time of many thousands of years preceding the first introduction of European influence. Different kinds of records have accumulated from these two eras.

The West has not been newly won. Even in its second phase of occupation, explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and adventurers have been itinerant visitors since La Verendre and his sons first saw the Rocky Mountains in 1742. Settlers and permanent occupation of the land came much later. With Calgary being founded in 1874, and Edmonton as a city, in 1904, and the Province itself not yet established until 1905, very little of the present phase of human occupation can claim the distinction of the century mark.

Some of our oldest citizens can still remember many of the earlier beginnings of our Province's history. In many cases the parents and grandparents of people living today were among the early settlers in Alberta. It is perhaps for these reasons that the question of giving proper attention to the conservation of our historical and archaeological resources has become a matter for public concern. The present population of Alberta now has a heritage in its own right to consider, cherish and preserve.

The Government of Alberta attaches considerable importance to its historical and archaeological resources, and the Honourable Horst Schmid, Minister of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, and the Honourable William J. Yurko, the Minister of the Environment, have requested the Environment Conservation Authority to conduct hearings on the conservation of historical and archaeological resources in the Province. The Ministers have asked the Authority through public hearings to review all present legislation and make recommendations dealing with the conservation of archaeological resources prior to written history as well as historical resources of more recent date.

Mr. Schmid and Mr. Yurko expressed the view that Provincial legislation does not now provide adequate protection for prehistoric and historic sites and that provision should be made for the rescue and conservation of this portion of our heritage. Since these matters are of direct interest to both the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and the Department of the Environment, the two Ministers have jointly requested that public hearings be held prior to the introduction of appropriate legislation by the Government to protect the archaeological and historical resources of the Province.

2. Public Advisory Committee on the Conservation of Historical and Archaeological Resources

In response to a submission made by the Canadian Archaeological Association to the Government of Alberta, the Environment Conservation Authority established a Public Advisory Committee on the Conservation of Historical and Archaeological Resources. The Advisory Committee was under the chairmanship of Dr. R.G. Forbis, the University of Calgary, President of the Canadian Archaeological Association. The other members were:

Mr. Hugh Dempsey, The Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.

Mr. R. O. Harrison, Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta,
Edmonton 40, Alberta.

Mr. A. W. Farmilo, Supertest Investments and Petroleum Limited,
Calgary 2, Alberta.

Dr. Lou A. Bayrock, Research Council of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Mr. Alex Johnston, Canada Department of Agriculture, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Chief John Snow, Alberta Indian Association, Morley, Alberta.

Dr. Alan L. Bryan, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Mr. James G. MacGregor, Historian, Edmonton, Alberta.

The Public Advisory Committee undertook a detailed search into existing legislation in Alberta, in other provinces in Canada and in other countries. The Committee also studied the available and potential archaeological and historical resources in the Province as well as the problems of their preservation and the needs for the future.

To assist in the work of the public hearings, the Public Advisory Committee on the Conservation of the Historical and Archaeological Resources has prepared the following documents: (1) a position paper, (2) a comprehensive background report and (3) a bibliography of further references that might assist in the preparation of submissions to the hearings. The present prospectus also derives in part from the work of the Advisory Committee.

3. Archaeological and Historical Resources

The historical and archaeological resources constitute one of the most valued, and yet one of the most fragile, assets of Alberta. Many important sites and structures have been destroyed or damaged by man and nature; many more are endangered by the increasing extensions of urban centres and industrial and public developments.

The preservation of one's heritage should require no justification. Just as efficiency may be the measure of a successful industry, so is the richness of a nation's culture and environment the measure of its well being. To lose sight of its past is to lose the roots from which a nation has grown.

The people of Alberta are custodians of its past for the whole of mankind as well as for generations of the future. Alberta is part of the world community, yet it is one of the few areas which has failed to take positive steps to protect its past. It is also the only province in Canada which has no comprehensive legislation for the conservation of its historical and archaeological resources.

The public has a direct interest in assuring that the physical remains of Alberta's history and prehistory are preserved for their scientific, educational, aesthetic and recreational values. Alberta also has a moral responsibility to the international community, for the fate of its historical and archaeological resources is of interest and concern to all mankind.

EXISTING LEGISLATION:

Concern for the protection of historical and archaeological resources in Alberta is barely expressed in present legislation. The law does recognize the existence of some historic sites on lands owned by the Crown, and does protect them to the extent of requiring persons to obtain permission from the appropriate authority to enter, explore or excavate sites of historical or scientific interest on provincial lands.

The only legislation relating specifically to sites in Alberta are The Public Lands Act (Sec. 20) and The Provincial Parks Act (Sec. 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11). None of these provisions is broad in scope and they tend to be inadequate in preventing the destruction of historical and archaeological resources, whether on a small scale or large.

In addition, The Alberta Heritage Act provides for a Historic Sites Advisory Committee, which advises the Minister on all matters relating to historic sites. Federal laws such as The Indian Act, The Historic Sites and Monuments Act, and The National Parks Act, also contain some protective legislation, but these specifically refer to Federal lands.

THE RESOURCES:

Although the archaeological and historical resources of Alberta include unique zoological and botanical entities, either fossilized or living, the present hearings are primarily concerned with the sites, structures and remains which have been created by earlier inhabitants of Alberta. These may range in time from paleo-Indian campsites of more than ten thousand years ago to cabins of pioneer settlers built within the present century.

Archaeological resources may include findspots of single artifacts, large campsites of prehistoric Indian tribes, buffalo jumps, cairns, tipi rings, pictographs and other manifestations, either on the surface or beneath it. Historical sites may be defined as localities, buildings and structures: (1) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; (2) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in the past; (3) that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of architectural construction; or (4) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to history.

THE PROBLEM:

The extent of historical and archaeological resources in Alberta is at present unknown. In the last two years some surveys have been made by a Federal-Provincial historic sites program, but one can only guess at the total extent of yet undiscovered or unrecorded resources in the province.

Added to the problem are the number of influences which are destroying sites of historical and archaeological significance. Most common of these are construction, vandalism and the forces of nature.

Among the construction projects which destroy sites are dams and other irrigation and hydro-electric projects, pipelines, logging operations, mines, industrial plants, and highway construction, including such related activities as borrow pits and detours. Urban development is also a destroyer. This includes housing and commercial projects, parks, golf courses, recreational areas and airports. Another category is rural development, including the cultivating, levelling and irrigating of farms, the construction of hunting lodges, summer cottages, parks and recreational areas and the building of air strips.

Vandalism is in a class by itself, for such destruction often is deliberate. Some of the most common types of destruction in this field are the defacing of pictographs, the pillaging of prehistoric campsites or buffalo jumps in a search for projectile points, and the senseless damaging of historical buildings and monuments.

The forces of nature, while not usually caused by man's activities, can often be controlled or harnessed. Most common are erosion, caused by rivers and lakes; wind erosion; natural decay; and destruction caused by the variable seasonal temperatures upon the soil.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

Legislation may be necessary if the Province is to:

- [a] Assert unequivocally the right of the government to all historical and archaeological resources.
- [b] Prevent the wilful destruction of historical and archaeological resources by individuals, corporations, and government agencies without prior authorization by the Minister responsible under the legislation.
- [c] Encourage private persons to participate in the preservation of historical and archaeological resources.
- [d] Establish an appropriate public advisory board.
- [e] Establish active agencies to preserve historical and archaeological resources.

The province can claim ultimate ownership over any historical or archaeological resources within its borders, except on Federal land, and it is therefore the obligation of the province to assure the conservation of these resources whenever necessary or desirable. Where there is a choice of alternative methods of preservation, protection should normally take precedence over salvaging objects and data. But whatever the means of preservation, an active agency of government should be established with qualified staff and adequate funds for the effective execution of a continuing program in both history and archaeology.

With the proper legislation and a responsible staff, the government will be able to undertake active programs to protect, acquire, restore, and maintain historical and archaeological sites, and to excavate those which cannot be saved. It can also undertake a comprehensive program of education, to inform the public about its heritage, to

make sites available for visitation and study, and to provide proper interpretation of them through exhibits, publications and other means.

There are indications that Albertans are becoming more aware of their history. The public wants to know about pre-historic man, about buffalo jumps, early ranches, the Mounted Police, pioneers, fur traders and explorers. They want to retain their links with the past, as evidenced by recent expressed desires to keep the symbols of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and by efforts to save the Cochrane Ranch, the Rutherford House in Edmonton, and the Rundle Lodge in Calgary. Future activities, however, may have to depend largely upon legislation which can provide the legal basis for conservation, and the framework upon which active programs may be built.

All concerned groups and individuals as well as the general public are encouraged to attend the hearings and make their views known. The Authority intends to contact as many of these as possible with individual requests to participate. The consensus of these public views and sentiments, combined with informed opinions, will form the basis for recommendations to the Cabinet for new and improved approaches to conservation of Historical and Archaeological resources in Alberta.

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